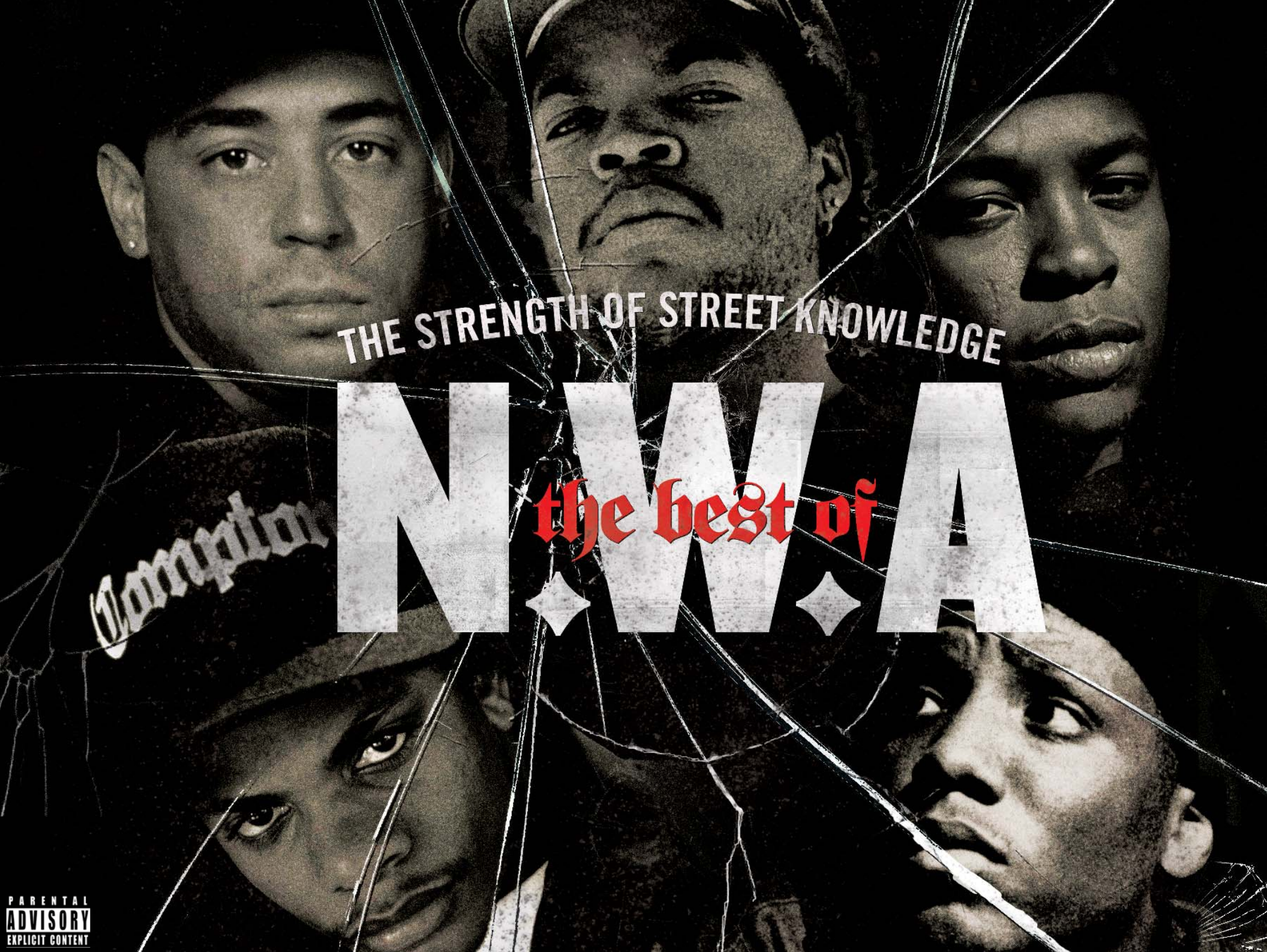
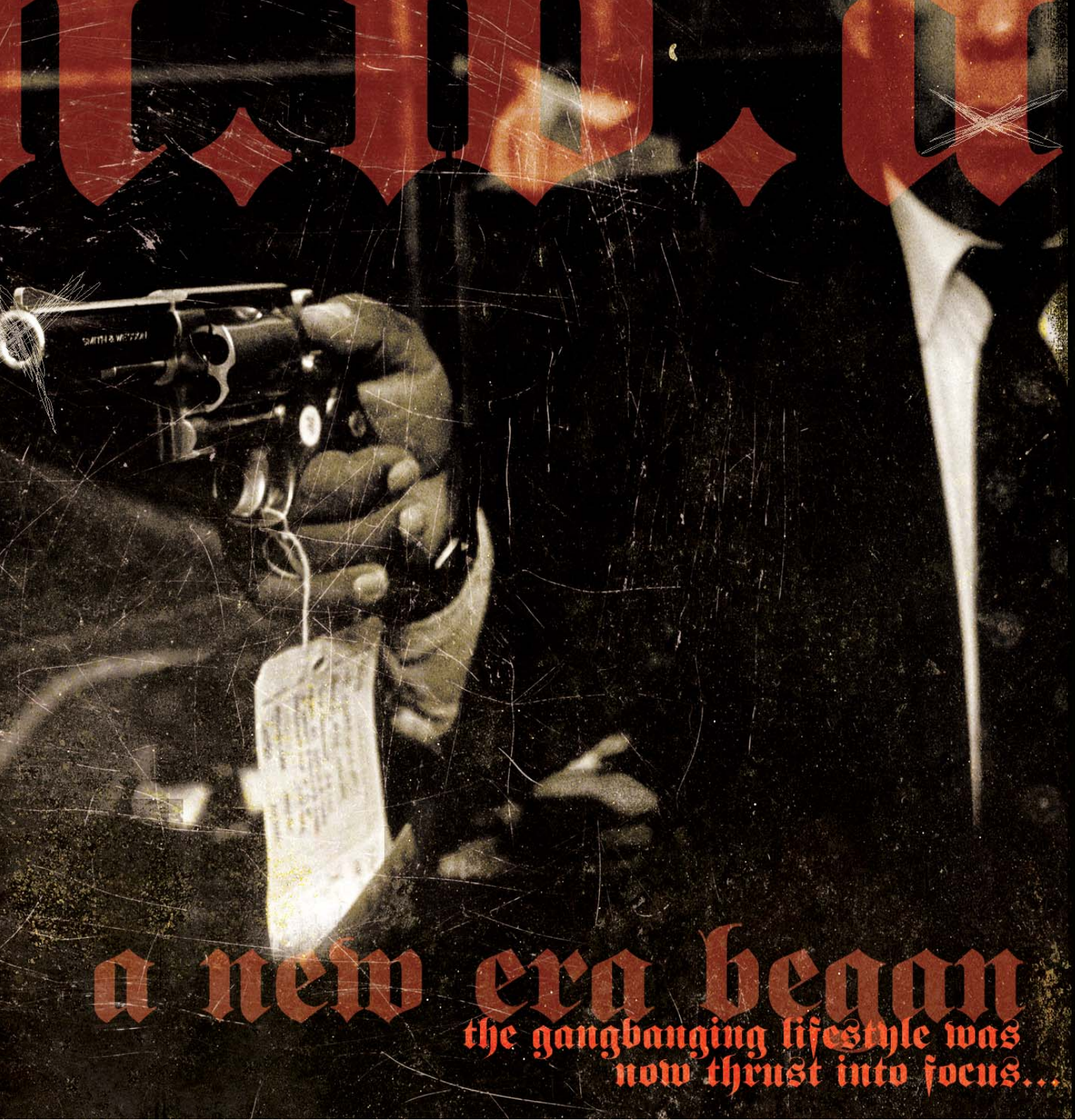

THE STRENGTH OF STREET KNOWLEDGE
N.W.A
the best of
Compton
PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



In 1988, rap was largely boastful and optimistic. LL Cool J was a tough rapper who also appealed to women. Rakim and Big Daddy Kane dazzled listeners with their intricate, poetic rhymes. Slick Rick earned accolades for his zany story-driven songs, and Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions were among the rap groups who united fans with tunes about black pride and self-empowerment. Indeed, rappers of this time were engaged in an unofficial competition to outperform each other lyrically, to earn the ever-elusive title of "The Best Rapper." To this end, every MC strove to come up with the cleverest boasts, the most ingenious lyrical structure and the most revolutionary delivery. The music itself was also upbeat, even soulful at times, thanks to the James Brown samples that regularly permeated rap cuts of the era.

Less than a year later, building on the social and political themes Public Enemy and BDP had begun to explore, the genre got a violent makeover. Dispensing with restraint, unbridled rage displaced the relatively tame lyrics about linguistic acumen and romancing women. A new era began in which police were targeted for murder plots and women were treated with contempt. The gangbanging lifestyle was now thrust into focus, the music became menacing and profanity became the norm rather than the exception. The group that executed this seismic musical – and eventually cultural – shift was N.W.A.

N.W.A members Eazy-E, Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, MC Ren and DJ Yella changed the way rap was made, the way people dressed and how the business of rap was handled. All of N.W.A's most important songs and videos, as well as rare footage of the group, are included on THE BEST OF N.W.A: THE STRENGTH OF STREET KNOWLEDGE, a must-have collection for fans eager to revisit this pivotal time in rap's evolution, as well as for anyone who wants to understand how and why gangsta rap became a cultural force in the late 1980s.

Eazy-E, who released N.W.A's landmark STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON and his own EAZY-DUZ-IT albums on his Ruthless Records label, solidified his status as a gangsta rap figurehead. Although he wasn't the first rapper to own his own label, Eazy-E was the first one to be successful nationally. He provided the blueprint for today's business-minded rappers, among them Jay-Z, Dr. Dre, Master P, Eminem and 50 Cent, all of whom own their own record labels. And even though N.W.A weren't the first gangsta rappers, they were the first gangsta rap group to take the movement to the mainstream.

Using his unique voice and an unconventional delivery, Eazy-E became a champion of ghetto dwellers nationwide, who knew of his past as a low-level drug dealer, who could identify with his street tales and who quickly imitated his gangsta looks and ways, ones he and N.W.A detailed on early hits ***Boyz-N-The Hood, 8 Ball*** and ***Dopeman***.

"When he came out with that shit, I was living the life that he was talking about," prolific Sacramento gangsta rapper C-Bo told me during an August 2006 interview. "We were gangbanging and doing all that shit, so when that hit the streets, it was crazy. It was like, 'Damn, these niggas talking

OUTTA
NWA
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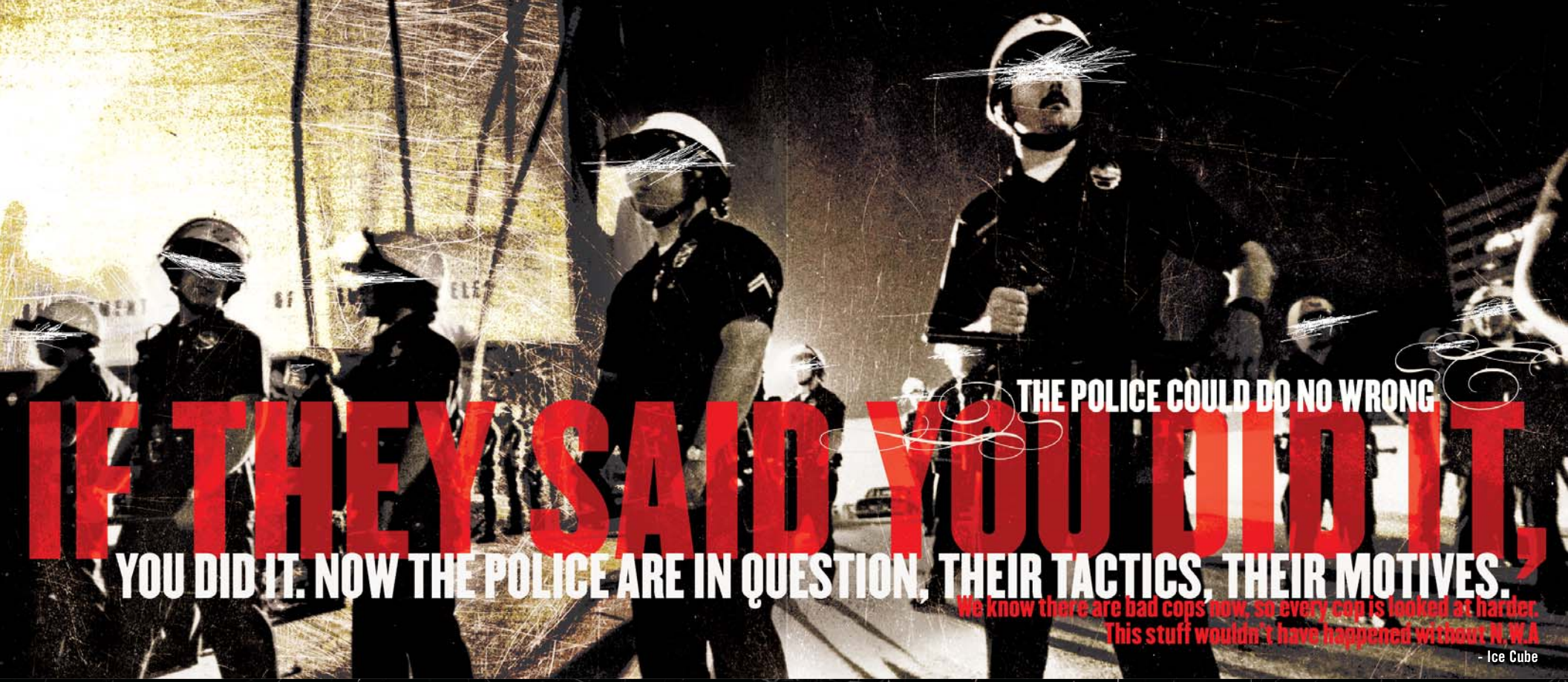

IF THEY SAID YOU DID IT,

THE POLICE COULD DO NO WRONG

YOU DID IT. NOW THE POLICE ARE IN QUESTION, THEIR TACTICS, THEIR MOTIVES.

We know there are bad cops now, so every cop is looked at harder. This stuff wouldn't have happened without N.W.A

- Ice Cube

about the shit on records now, telling the world about it.' When it was all hip-hop, with these baggy jean motherfuckers with flattops, he changed it to where you'd see niggas like us: jheri curls, sagging with Chuck Taylors and talking real street shit. He was a real street nigga."

A major reason the streets respected and rallied behind Eazy-E and N.W.A so fiercely was the STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON cut ***Fuck Tha Police***. The jaw-dropping song shed an uncompromising light on an unfortunate truth in American ghettos: virtually unchecked police brutality against innocent blacks. N.W.A voiced the fury and pain felt by generations of blacks who had fallen victim to wayward cops who figured that a badge and gun gave them license to randomly select innocent blacks for target practice or use as piñatas. N.W.A's well-articulated protest was a call-to-arms, a warning that they were going to fight back against dirty cops.

The song famously earned a 1989 letter from the FBI, which condemned the song's anti-law enforcement bent. Equally important, the song forced white America to look into the issue of police brutality, a fact underscored in 1991 when an amateur video showed black Los Angeles motorist Rodney King being beaten by a group of Los Angeles police officers.

"It changed people's outlook on the police," Ice Cube told me during a January 2006 interview, of ***"Fuck Tha Police."*** "Before ***Fuck Tha Police*** came out, the police could do no wrong. If they say you did it, goddamn it, you did it. Now the police are in question, their tactics, their motives. We know there are bad cops now, so every cop is looked at harder. This stuff wouldn't have happened without N.W.A doing STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON and letting the world know that you should be able to be your damn self and say what you want to say."

N.W.A's volatile music was soon matched in real life. Ice Cube left the group after the release of STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON over a financial dispute. Many fans and critics wondered how the group would survive without its lyrical mastermind. N.W.A simply released music that was more explicit, more sensational and more sonically abrasive. The title track of N.W.A's 1990 EP, 100 MILES AND RUNNIN', picked up where STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON's more incendiary tracks like ***Gangsta Gangsta*** and ***Straight Outta Compton*** left off, setting the stage for N.W.A's last studio album, 1991's explosive EFIL4ZAGGIN. With driving, hair-raising production from Dr. Dre and Yella, ***Appetite For Destruction***, ***Real Niggaz***, and ***Approach To Danger*** solidified N.W.A's status as rap's premier group with an unrivaled combination of musical might and gangsta lyricism.

Despite peaking sonically on EFIL4ZAGGIN, N.W.A soon disintegrated. Dr. Dre left Ruthless Records, leaving the mighty label without its musical backbone. And while MC Ren and Eazy-E continued releasing solo material on Ruthless, the imprint lost its figurehead in 1995, when Eazy-E died due to complications from AIDS. Dr. Dre, Ice Cube and Eazy-E had been in the process of reuniting N.W.A before Eazy-E's death, but the idea was left unfathomable with E's passing. (Fortunately for N.W.A fans, Ice Cube, Dr. Dre and MC Ren were featured alongside Snoop Dogg on the NEXT FRIDAY soundtrack's ***Chin Check***.)

To fully understand N.W.A's impact, look at the group's extensive musical family tree, which includes many of rap's most important artists. In addition to his work with N.W.A, Eazy-E and Ruthless Records later released albums from The D.O.C. and Bone thugs-n-harmony. Eazy-E also signed the Atban Klan, an early incarnation of the Black Eyed Peas. Dr. Dre has gone on to become arguably the best producer in rap history, having overseen releases from Snoop Dogg, Eminem, 50 Cent, The Game and a host of others.

In addition to becoming one of Hollywood's most bankable stars, Ice Cube showed his keen musical ear by endorsing protégé Mack 10, who released a string of Gold albums in the 1990s, and by forming the Platinum rap trio Westside Connection with Mack 10 and gangsta rap legend WC.

But for all his accolades as a solo artist, a musical mentor and a box office juggernaut, Ice Cube readily acknowledges the significance of the group that launched him to superstardom. "The most important thing I've done in rap is being a part of N.W.A," Ice Cube told me.

And, as THE BEST OF N.W.A: THE STRENGTH OF STREET KNOWLEDGE makes clear, there's no need to argue.

– Soren Baker, author of THE MUSIC LIBRARY: THE HISTORY OF RAP AND HIP-HOP
Los Angeles / August 2006

Now Available As Ringtunes:

◆ 8-Ball ◆ Alwayz Into Somethin' ◆ Appetite For Destruction
◆ Boyz-N-The Hood ◆ Express Yourself ◆ Fuck Tha Police
◆ Gangsta Gangtsa ◆ Just Don't Bite It ◆ Straight Outta Compton

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1. STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON
(Patterson – Wright – Jackson)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1988 Priority Records, LLC

2. APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION
(Curry – Patterson – Young – Kane)
From the Priority Records release EFIL4ZAGGIN (#57126, 1991)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

3. DOPE MAN
(Banks – Rolison – Jackson)
From the Ruthless/Priority Records release N.W.A AND THE POSSE (1987; re-released in 1989 on Priority Records as #57119)
Produced by Dr. Dre For High Powered Productions
℗ 1987 Priority Records, LLC

4. FUCK THA POLICE
(Patterson – Jackson)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1988, 2006 Priority Records, LLC

5. REAL NIGGAZ
(Carraby – Wright – Young – Patterson)
From the Priority Records release EFIL4ZAGGIN (#57126, 1991)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

6. 8-BALL
(Jackson – Young)
From the Ruthless/Priority Records release N.W.A AND THE POSSE (1987; re-released in 1989 on Priority Records as #57119)
Produced by Dr. Dre For High Powered Productions
℗ 1987 Priority Records, LLC

7. EXPRESS YOURSELF
(Wright – Jackson)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
Contains a sample from *Express Yourself* as recorded by Charles Wright & The Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band, under license from Warner Bros. Records, used by permission.
℗ 1988 Priority Records, LLC

8. ALWAYZ INTO SOMETHIN'
(Young – Patterson – Curry)
From the Priority Records release EFIL4ZAGGIN (#57126, 1991)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

9. A BITCH IZ A BITCH
(Young – Jackson)
From the Ruthless/Priority Records release N.W.A AND THE POSSE (1987; re-released in 1989 on Priority Records as #57119)
Produced by Dr. Dre for High Powered Productions
℗ 1987 Priority Records, LLC

10. GANGSTA GANGSTA
(Arington – Bonner – Buddy – Carter – De Vaughn – Jackson – Jones Middlebrook – Morrison – Napier – Noland – Parker – Patterson – Pierce – Satchell – Webster – Wright – Young)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
Contains a sample from *Funky Worm* (*Bonner – Jones – Middlebrook – Morrison – Noland – Webster*) as recorded by the Ohio Players, under license from Westbound Records, used by permission.
℗ 1988 Priority Records, LLC

11. 100 MILES AND RUNNIN'
(Young – Wright – Hutchison – Patterson – Hancock – Jackson – Ragin – Dozier – Holland – Holland)
From the Ruthless/Priority Records EP
100 MILES AND RUNNIN' (#CDL-7224, 1990)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
Contains a sample from *Nowhere To Run* (*Dozier – Holland – Holland*) as recorded by Martha Reeves And The Vandellas, under license from Motown Records, used by permission.
Contains a sample from *Hang Up Your Hang-Ups* (*Hancock – Jackson – Ragin*) as recorded by Herbie Hancock, under license from Columbia Records, used by permission.
℗ 1990 Priority Records, LLC

12. BOYZ-N-THE HOOD
(Wright – Jackson – Young)
From the Ruthless/Priority Records release N.W.A AND THE POSSE (1987; re-released in 1989 on Priority Records as #57119)
Produced by Dr. Dre for High Powered Productions
℗ 1987 Priority Records, LLC

13. REAL NIGGAZ DON'T DIE
(The DOC – Carraby – Wright – Zesses – Fekaris – Young – Patterson)
From the Priority Records release EFIL4ZAGGIN (#57126, 1991)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
Contains a sample of *I Just Want To Celebrate* (*Zesses – Fekaris*) as recorded by Rare Earth, under license from Rare Earth Records, used by permission.
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

14. COMPTON'S IN THE HOUSE [remix]
(Jackson – Young – Patterson)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Productions
℗ 1988 Priority Records, LLC

15. APPROACH TO DANGER
(Young – Patterson – Curry – Carraby)
From the Priority Records release EFIL4ZAGGIN (#57126, 1991)
Produced by Dr. Dre and Yella for High Powered Production
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

16. CHIN CHECK
(Young – Patterson – Broadus – Brown – Bradford – Jackson)
From the Priority Records soundtrack NEXT FRIDAY (#23123, 1999)
Produced by Dr. Dre
Dr. Dre appears courtesy of Aftermath/Interscope Records
℗ 1991 Priority Records, LLC

17. IF IT AIN'T RUFF
(Patterson – Mitchell)
From the Priority Records release
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (#57112, 1989)
Produced by Dr. Dre And Yella For High Powered Productions
℗ 1988 Priority Records, LLC

n.w.a

members EAZY-E, ICE CUBE, DR. DRE, MC REN and DJ YELLA changed the way rap was made, the way people dressed and how the business of rap was handled.

COMPTON 4
SOUTH GATE 1
INGLEWOOD 7
CASH
BREAKFAST
Special
DRIVE